DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 184 138 CS 205 454

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TITLE A Thousand Topics for Composition (Secondary Level). Fourth Edition.
INSTITUTION Illinois Association of Teachers of English, Urbana.
PUB DATE 80
NOTE 34p.; The Illinois Association of Teachers of English is an affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English.
JOURNAL CIT Illinois English Bulletin; v67 n3 Spr 1980

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Assignments; Course Content; Secondary Education; *Writing (Composition); *Writing Exercises; *Writing Instruction

ABSTRACT

The 1,175 composition topics that appear in this special edition of the "Illinois English Bulletin" are suggested as possibilities for high school student writing assignments. After a brief statement about how secondary English teachers might use the topics in their classes, the topics are categorized by subject matter and types of composition. The categories include personal reminiscences and reactions, the familiar essay, the character sketch (types and individuals), themes of description/classification, processes, comparison and contrast, the school, farming, religion, the arts and entertainment, sports, science, persuasive exposition, argumentative exposition, "what if," some different types of reading activities, writing about literature, and topics for impromptu writing. (RL)

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SPRING 1980

A Thousand Topics for Composition: Fourth Edition

(Secondary Level)

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iate ILLINOIS ENGLISH BULLETIN

ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

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CS205 454

ISSN 0019-2023

ILLINOIS ENGLISH BULLETIN

Official Publication of the Illinois Association of Teachers of English

Vol. 67, No. 3 Urbana, Illinois Spring, 1980

A Thousand Topics for Composition: Fourth Edition

(Secondary Level)

The first edition of *A Thousand Topics for Composition* was published in May, 1947, by the Iilinois Association of Teachers of English. The second appeared in December, 1951; the third in January, 1971. This edition is the fourth. No IATE publication has been so successful. Thousands of copies have been sold by IATE and the National Council of Teachers of English.

The first two editions were compiled by a graduate student at the University of Illinois — Marjorie E. Fox — from topics suggested by instructors of freshman rhetoric in the University. The third edition and this one are the result of the IATE Special Projects Committee that selected topics contributed by many junior and senior high school teachers of English in Illinois. The chairperson for the third edition was Kenneth Ettner of Elgin High School; the chairperson for this edition is Terry Sherer, formerly of Quincy High School and now Director of the Region IV Area Service Center.

It is conceivable that a teacher could use some of these topics for free-response writing without any kind of motivation, similar to that required for the English Achievement Test of the College Entrance Examination Board. But we suggest that most topics be assigned only after proper motivation — usually as the result of stimulating discussion in class but occasionally with the use of films, filmstrips, recordings, newspaper and magazine articles, radio and television programs, and the like. Rarely do any topics simply mentioned or written on the chalk board evoke the excellence of response that do topics discussed in some detail before being assigned. Most students acquire ideas of their own from participating in and listening to stimulating interchanges among their classmates. Just as the act of responsible writing initiates thinking, so does animated discussion, often with the aid of various media.

Motivation should precede most composition assignments to avoid students saying, "I have no ideas" or "I don't know what to write." With effective motivation, students acquire ideas *before they write* which in turn stimulate further ideas *as they write*. This practice recognizes the fact that thinking must precede writing and that it also occurs in the writing process.

Assigning almost any topic in this *Bulletin* will evoke ideas among today's adolescents. Often, however, a teacher may wish to suggest that the more or less general topic be revised to become more specific and thus enable students to tailor the topic to their knowledge or experience. Such advice also teaches students to narrow their topics, a practice which in turn requires them to write specifically rather than generally. If teachers practice these suggestions, they will create an environment in which students discover that the blank page is not frightening. They will experience E. M. Forster's dictum that they "know what they think when they know what they say."

Perusal of this *Bulletin* will reveal topics categorized under most headings used in previous editions. Some are by subject matter; others by types of composition. Perusal may also serve to suggest other topics, related or unrelated, that more nearly fit a particular group of students. There can be no substitute for neatly tailored topics that bring about the best writing students can do.

Special thanks for this edition are due to chairperson Terry Sherer, and to the following active IATE members: Rachel Faries, Raymond Hollmann, Lee Mulcrone, Bernice Rappel, Mary Sasse, and Jean Sprenger.

PERSONAL REMINISCENCES

1. My first fight.
2. My first date.
3. My first encounter with the law.
4. My first encounter with racial discrimination.
5. My first semester in high school. (Next semester will be better.)
6. My first job.
7. My first spanking. (On being punished for the first time.)
8. My first dollar.
9. My first ten years were the hardest.
10. My most important decision and why I made it.
11. The most stupid thing I ever did.
12. My most serious accident.
13. A close call I had.
14. I met my friends at the zoo.
15. How people resemble (zoo) animals.
16. The longest minute I ever spent.
17. The wisest thing I ever did.
18. Prize memory of the year. (Regrets of the year.)

19. Thoughts on New Year's Eve.
20. How I learned to drive a car.
21. How I learned to dance.
22. An unforgettable experience.
23. The fun of being sick.
24. Moving into a strange town.
25. Thoughts on being out late at night.
26. Learning to like vegetables.
27. One of life's comedies (or tragedies) in which I played a star part.
28. Things I have lost.
29. A mistake I vow never to repeat. (I'll never do that again.)
30. The dog (or other pet) in my life.
31. I sold papers. (A job I have held.) (My summer job.)
32. I was a soda jerk (waitress, machinist, laundry man, salesman).
33. What I learned from Dad/Mom.
34. A tradition (or custom) in our family (neighborhood, section, state, or country).
35. How my family celebrates Easter (or some other holiday).
36. The origin of my family name.
37. My ancestors. (Page from my family history.)
38. Meet the family.
39. The "400" in my home town.
40. An inexpensive good time.
41. An experiment I once tried.
42. My big moment.
43. Happy ending.
44. I expected too much.
45. I was in a hurry, and....
46. I don't feel that way any more. (I've changed my mind.)
47. I was scared.
48. That was a vacation! ("Having a wonderful time.")
49. A sports event I will never forget.
50. An obstacle I overcame (or must overcome).
51. A hunting (fishing) trip.
52. The little red schoolhouse. (Sunday school or kindergarten as I remember it.)
53. An incident of childhood which has affected my personality.
54. Growing pains.
55. My life and hard times. (Hard times behind me.)
56. My experience in hospitals. (My operation.)
57. It shouldn't happen to a dog.
58. He who hesitates is lost.
59. My conscience is my guide.
60. Blind date.
61. Childhood ambitions.
62. A strong influence in my life.
63. I learned from experience.
64. My housing problem.
65. Houses I remember.
66. The best class period this semester.
67. I kept my New Year's resolution.
68. What I have learned in English (or history, etc.).
69. An important decision.
70. An unusual incident.
71. A midnight rendezvous.
72. I was there.
73. A day I would like to forget.
74. Too far from home.
75. A tense moment.
76. I remember Mama.
77. Clouds in the sky.
78. I was a hero.
79. If I could do it over.
80. Night and you.
81. If I never accomplish another thing (I'm glad I had the opportunity to...).
82. I knew I was no longer a child when....
83. My favorite toy.
84. First overnight trip from home.
85. Love affair with Saturday morning TV.
86. When I believed in Santa Claus.
87. Too early in the morning.
88. How I learned to read.
89. Champion!
90. A boaster deflated.

91. The wrong key.
92. In one ear.
93. The twain met.
94. Tinker, tinker little car.
95. I knew it would happen.
96. A simple pleasure.
97. I thought I'd never find my way back.
98. Is honesty the best policy?
99. If I only had one friend,...
100. It wasn't my fault.
101. It *was* my fault.
102. "I confess not to have shaped events but to have been shaped by them."—is a saying of Abraham Lincoln's. Describe one event which has shaped you as a person, explain that event, and explain the effect of the incident upon you.
103. Think of some fear you had as a child. Relate your experiences with that fear and how you overcame it. (conflict)
104. Relate an incident, real or imagined, in which an innocent situation turned into something dangerous or was misinterpreted.
105. Being the oldest child has many advantages.
106. Have you ever deliberately tried to win the friendship of someone who was ill disposed toward you? How did you go about doing so, and how much success did you have?
107. Describe a situation in which your family had to face great danger or a period of great anxiety. How did it end?
108. Here are two maxims: "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread." "He who hesitates is lost." Discuss a situation in which you followed one of these maxims, and explain why the other course would have been wiser.
109. "Getting even" may not be socially approved behavior, but it can be a source of great satisfaction. Give an account of an incident in which you suffered injury and derived pleasure from a skillfully executed plan or retaliation.
110. Describe an interesting local superstition, legend, or tradition connected with your home town.
111. Trace the development of your interest in reading, music, art, or sports.
112. Have you found yourself in a situation where the safety of many (or some) depended on your good judgment and quick action? How did the emergency arise, and how did you meet it?
113. Give an account or an incident from which you learned an important truth such as "Never trust a stranger," or "Appearances can be deceiving."
114. A wise man once said, "A little experience upsets a lot of theory." Explain and illustrate this assertion, using an incident from your own life.

PERSONAL REACTIONS

1. Why I dislike my name.
2. Why _____ is my favorite sport.
3. Why I like a small town.
4. Why I go to church.
5. Why I shall go to college.
6. Why _____ is my favorite picture.
7. Why I smoke (or do not).
8. Why I like poetry.
9. Why I like music.
10. Why I believe in immortality.

11. Why I do not believe in divorce.
12. Why I want to be a _____
13. Why I like to read novels.
14. Why I prefer rock to classical music (or vice versa).
15. Why I don't like comic strips.
16. My idea of hard work.
17. My idea of a good course.
18. What is a gentleman (or a lady)?
19. My idea of a dull evening.
20. How I feel in a dentist's chair.
21. How I feel when I have not prepared a lesson (or for an exam).
22. How new clothes affect me.
23. How I would invest one thousand dollars.
24. How I treat nosy people.
25. How much am I influenced by advertising?
26. What animal I should like to be for a day.
27. What religion means to me.
28. What's wrong with my home town.
29. What I think about science laboratories, student participation in extracurricular activities, air travel, campus hangouts.
30. What I'd do to prevent World War III.
31. What I want from life.
32. What I want in a wife (or husband).
33. What I have gained from bull sessions.
34. Where am I going?
35. What I really enjoy doing.
36. If I were a (Jew, Protestant, Black, Catholic, labor leader, capitalist, congressman, or newspaper editor).
37. If I had but three days to live.
38. My future as I see it.
39. My favorite pastime.
40. My favorite hero/heroine in fiction.
41. If I were in charge....
42. High school years are the best years of one's life. (Advice I would leave to my grandchildren.)
43. Suggestions for students 50-100 years from now.
44. The unisex movement.
45. My idea of a good time is to....
46. There is nothing I like better than to... (or like least).
47. What are you doing for the rest of your life?
48. I'd vote for that man/woman.
49. Let's abolish science.
50. Man's greatest invention.
51. Why man is superior to monkey.
52. Why read or write?
53. If ignorance is bliss....
54. How to be happy though stupid.
55. The decision is yours.
56. Writing my will.
57. My own blacklist.
58. Education as I would like it.
59. In another life I must have been....
60. I would rather be blind than deaf (or vice versa).
61. My life would change if....
62. Monday morning blues!
63. It must be wonderful to be the baby in the family.
64. Limiting yourself to one friend can lead to negative results.
65. My "rose-colored glasses."
66. We all have experiences that help us make discoveries about ourselves and our goals in life. Explain at least two experiences that you have had that changed or directed the course of your life.
67. When does an adolescent become an adult? Is there a difference between a teenager and an adult?

FAMILIAR ESSAY

1. Commerce and Christmas.
2. On the coming of spring.
3. A walk in nature.
4. Who needs books?
5. Observing orangutans.
6. On the assembly line.
7. Lazarus rises from the tomb.
8. The end of the world.
9. Sunday morning in. . . .
10. The virtues of meditation and silence.
11. Vanity and self-esteem.
12. Don't put me on.
13. Do not fold, bend, staple or mutilate.
14. Push down, turn, and open slowly if you can.
15. Our plastic world.
16. Free will.
17. In praise of daydreaming.
18. Getting there first: the American experience.
19. Moustaches and beards.
20. Life on the farm.
21. Life in the city.
22. On hearing an alarm clock.
23. The value of pets.
24. Superstitious practices.
25. Who is my neighbor?
26. Misleading labels.
27. What is success in life?
28. What is sportsmanship?
29. My definition of tolerance.
30. What is humor?
31. What liberty means to me.
32. What is meant by maturity.
33. The meaning of dreams.
34. Benefits of crying.
35. What makes an educated person today.
36. Qualities of friendship.
37. The educational value of mistakes.
38. American slang.
39. The value of patriotic symbols.
40. Words are cheap.
41. What professionalism is and is not.
42. News commentators.
43. Career women.
44. Does society owe me a job?
45. The urge to join.
46. A typical Northerner's view of the South.
47. Comic movies.
48. If I had twenty-four hours to live.
49. A tale told by. . . .
50. Once upon a time.
51. If I were principal.
52. Inanimate autobiographies:
    The Diary of a Tin Can
    My Life as a Rolling Stone
    The Life of a Bicycle
53. Pet peeves.
54. Life begins at 10 p.m.
55. An adventure in friendship.
56. The virtues of idleness.
57. Pages from my family history.
58. Born thirty years too soon.
59. I'd like to write a book.
60. How can I find time to study?
61. Being contented.
62. Bargain shopping.
63. Crushes and hero-worship.
64. The most valuable thing I have learned.
65. An important decision.
66. How I read a newspaper.
67. Local crudities (or curiosities).
68. The male animal.
69. Fire!
70. A curious dream.
71. The girl (boy) that I marry.
72. Advice to entering freshmen.
73. Disco fever.
74. The art of conversation.
75. I should have known.
76. On favorite colors.
77. Never take a girl to a football game.
78. Let me cry on your shoulder.
79. Proposal.
80. Lest we forget.
81. Plot for murder.
82. Worrying is good for you.
83. A young man's game.
84. Going around in circles.

85. A contribution to better living.
86. Unnatural characters in literature.
87. If an ancient Greek came to Chicago. (Or to _____.)
88. Shoe personality.
89. New brooms raise a great dust.
90. A happy profession.
91. Nurses are angels.
92. On a rainy day.
93. Pride before a fall.
94. The tribulations of a high school student.
95. Soap operas.
96. Why girls wear make-up.
97. Campus sideshows.
98. The problems of dating.
99. Why all the excitement?
100. Driving hogs.
101. Tied to the apron strings.
102. Table manners.
103. Mental cruelty.
104. The ideal date.
105. What a home ought to be.
106. Heart trouble at school.
107. Crowding the heroes' bench.
108. Many brave hearts.
109. Library notes.
110. TV commercials.
111. Why people have hobbies.
112. Borrowing and lending.
113. The life of a piggy bank.
114. The kind of friends who wear well.
115. Local weather.
116. Maturity has its drawbacks.
117. On a shoestring.
118. A real champion.
119. Going, going, gone.
120. The blue ribbon.
121. The world in which I live.
122. Cats are a nuisance (blessing).
123. The advantages of being a hermit.
124. "Look for the Silver Lining."
125. Borrowing.
126. Today's slang.
127. The value of pessimism.
128. The values of sleep.
129. What is at the other end of the rainbow?
130. Hope is a thing with feathers.
131. The sadness of the average person who wishes to be somebody.
132. A man's (woman's) downfall because of greed and vanity.
133. Loss of identity.

CHARACTER SKETCH (TYPES)

1. Day dreamer.
2. Chicago taxi driver.
3. The practical joker.
4. The proud parent.
5. The "successful" man or woman.
6. The selfish person.
7. The drunkard.
8. The student.
9. Baby-sitter.
10. Preacher's son (or daughter).
11. Student waiter.
12. Camp counselor.
13. Betty Co-ed.
14. Joe College.
15. Student on vacation.
16. The movie detective.
17. The campus leader.
18. A stag at a dance.
19. That tired waitress.
20. Bleacher athlete.
21. The football idol.
22. The local policeman.
23. Teachers who bore me.
24. POWs.
25. Meet John Doe (the average American).
26. The alum.
27. The great lover.
28. The traveling salesman.

CHARACTER SKETCH (INDIVIDUALS)

1. A person I have almost forgotten.
2. My friend, _____, someone of a different race or nationality.
3. A person I can't bear.
4. My favorite teacher (relative, commentator).
5. The most wonderful person I know.
6. A first-rate teacher.
7. My distinguished ancestor.
8. My best friend.
9. A person who has influenced my life.
10. What I learned from Mom. (In defense of Dad.) (My sister.)
11. The most prominent citizen in my home town.
12. The most disreputable person I ever saw.
13. A person I will never forget.
14. A brief sketch of myself (any age, any mood).
15. Meet the strange friend.
16. Meet the Doc.
17. Meet the family.
18. My roommate.
19. My landlady.
20. My most interesting friend.
21. The person I admire most.
22. Grandfather or grandmother.
23. The man or woman who never had a chance.
24. The most abused public servant.
25. An historical character.
26. An interesting public personality.
27. A character from fiction I should like to meet.
28. My favorite hero/heroine.
29. Brothers under the skin.
30. An army character.
31. From the other side of the tracks.

DESCRIPTION

1. The most beautiful spot I know.
2. Colors in everyday life.
3. A tropical sunset.
4. Snowfall.
5. Spring in the country.
6. An impressive sight.
7. Scenic beauty on the campus.
8. Rural England (France, Belgium, etc.) as I saw it.
9. A storm. (A snow storm.)
10. Winter in _____.
11. Across the United States by rail.
12. A scene for a photographer.
13. Full moon.
14. Night shift.
15. January.
16. What my study table looks like.
17. The most horrible sight I ever saw.
18. The main street of my home town (describing stores, people, landmarks, etc.).
19. A meal at a quick-lunch counter.
20. Classroom atmosphere.
21. A visit to the slums.
22. Graduation day.
23. The perfect crime.
24. The ideal school.
25. What is beauty?
26. The jungle of Chicago.
27. The place I prefer to be.
28. Home of a famous person.
29. An old shop.
30. My favorite haunt.
31. An efficient kitchen.
32. State (county) fair.
33. Saturday night in _____.
34. Sounds at night.
35. Farm sale.
36. In a strange land (real or imaginary).

37. Chicago night spots (any other city).
38. With pen and brush.
39. A street scene.
40. Setting of a novel or play.
41. Hometown drugstore.
42. A lonesome road.
43. Sunday dinner.
44. My room.
45. The auto of the future.
46. A mysterious sound.
47. My English class.
48. Bargain day.
49. Seven o'clock Saturday night at the roller rink.
50. Night on the streets of _____.
51. The well-dressed man or woman.
52. An architectural fiasco.
53. Cats.
54. The ideal Illinois farm.
55. The _____ music festival.
56. A portrait of Satan.

THEME SUBJECTS FOR DESCRIPTION/CLASSIFICATION

1. How many different types of students can you name? (E.g., the serious, the social butterfly, the athlete, and the campus politician.) They might be classified according to their evident purposes for coming to school. Tell where you will find each kind, what he will be doing, how he will be dressed, etc.
2. Classify the kinds of basketball players you observe at a basketball game.
3. Classify the types of spectators you observe at a basketball game.
4. Classify the types of love you have observed.
5. Describe several types of unwanted visitors or guests and various means useful for getting rid of them.
6. Name and characterize at least three different kinds of bridge players.
7. Name and characterize at least three different kinds of "dates."
8. Name and characterize at least three different kinds of church-goers.
9. Name and characterize at least three different kinds of movie-goers.
10. Name and characterize at least three different kinds of teachers.
11. Radio commenators and "disc jockeys" come in a considerable number of types these days. Name and discuss certain ones.
12. What kinds of students fail in college (in high school)? Classify them by the cause of their failure, and describe each type as to appearance, activities, habits, and companions.
13. Name three or four ways of heating a house. What are their chief advantages rated by efficiency, cost, and ease of installation and operation?
14. Discuss four or five careers for women, pointing out the advantages of each.
15. Classify several new "wonder" drugs (or cosmetics) on the market, noting their qualities, the purpose for which they can be used, and the success they show in serving their purpose.
16. Consider the people you see around you in the school or public library. Can you distinguish three or four separate types according to their

apparent purpose for being there as reflected in their conduct and appearance? What is each reading? How diligently?

17. Describe three or four different types of shoppers seen in a supermarket. How is each dressed? What does he buy? How does he select it?
18. Classify children's games by the equipment they require, the noise and energy involved, or their usefulness in learning.
19. What will life be like in the future? In thirty years from now, will the world be a better place? Or will we look back to 19-- as the "good old days?" No one can be sure, but we can use our imaginations and project ourselves into what we think the future might be. You will look forward in time to when you are 40-50 years old. Invent a planet of your own. What will it look like? Who will live on it? What will your average day be like? Discuss life as it will be on your planet.
20. Teacher brings a bag of assorted unwanted articles — each student pulls something out. Then, imagine you are an explorer sent from Mars to see what might be found on the strange planet Earth. You come across *this* object, but can't take it back with you to show your countrymen. So... describe it to them; include its *probable* use, and give it a name.
21. Your company has just created a new candy bar. It is carmel and nutty. It is high in calories, but nutritious. It comes in bite sizes. You can find it in vending machines or the supermarket. You are to make a sellable jingle for this product. It must be snappy! Note, too, that you need to give a name for this treat.
22. Put together 2 animals such as a kangaroo and a giraffe to form a new animal: A GIRAFARO! a. Describe the animal's looks and physical characteristics. b. Explain his eating habits, climate, manner of movement, etc.
23. You are making a science fiction horror movie. Your job is to create a monster. Describe the monster in detail so that the reader can picture it.
24. (Play sounds from a haunted house.) Imagine you are standing inside this house. Describe in detail the sounds you hear; also include anything that you "see."
25. Play a sound tape of a sequence of sounds that make up a story. Using the sounds as clues, write a story describing what happens.
26. You have been asked to design a new ride for a carnival. Describe the ride in detail so that your reader can picture it.

PROCESSES

1. How to keep your girl (boy) friend.
2. How to spend Sunday.
3. How to track a wild animal.
4. How to develop self-control.
5. How to prepare my favorite dish.
6. How to find happiness.

7. How to take good snapshots.
8. How to use make-up.
9. How to prepare for an examination.
10. How to take notes.
11. How to enjoy exam week.
12. How to plan a meal.
13. How to criticize music.
14. How to avoid air tragedies.
15. How to live on $___ a month.
16. How to keep friends.
17. How to buy a used car.
18. How I balance my budget.
19. How to spend a weekend.
20. How to be a good roommate.
21. How to show cattle.
22. How to enjoy music.
23. How to loaf intelligently.
24. How to entertain a chaperon.
25. How to "apple polish."
26. How to give a gentle hint.
27. How to entertain the family.
28. How to leave a party.
29. How to dress a baby.
30. How to make an impression on a girl.
31. How to paper a room.
32. How to be popular.
33. How to administer artificial respiration.
34. How to choose a friend.
35. How to make tea.
36. How (not) to prepare for a journey.
37. How to solve the housing problem.
38. How to caddy.
39. How to make cheese.
40. How to review a book.
41. How to develop film.
42. How to write a critical paper.
43. How to make coffee.
44. How to spend your time profitably while standing in line.
45. How a camera takes pictures.
46. How to clean a rifle.
47. How to write a good theme.
48. How to enjoy a vacation.
49. How to be nonchalant when embarrassed.
50. How to hunt with a camera.
51. How to study systematically.
52. How to overhaul an engine.
53. How to sleep in class.
54. How to approach Dad or Mom.
55. How seeds scatter.
56. How I would change present (traffic, food, education) laws.
57. How to play a game.
58. How to drive a car.
59. How to shave.
60. How to spend an enjoyable evening in _____.
61. Learning to ride a horse.
62. Do's and don't's for basketball fans.
63. Tinkering with machinery.
64. The serve in tennis.
65. Choosing a college wardrobe.
66. A good party game.
67. Earning one's way.
68. In case of fire _____
69. The best scheme I ever heard of to make money.
70. Making something out of nothing.
71. Making a hobby profitable.
72. Choosing clothes combinations.
73. Making social organizations successful.
74. Miracles nature never thought of.
75. Planning a small farm.
76. A good floor plan.
77. Safety gadgets for fliers.
78. How books are classified in a library.
79. Perhaps you know something about the propagation and culture of a particular kind of flower requiring specialized care. Roses, camellias, gardenias, azaleas, and irises, for instance, are such flowers. Choose one of these, or some other flower, and describe in detail how it is grown.
80. If you have ever performed a scientific experiment outside of a school laboratory, describe in detail how you went about it and what results you achieved.
81. Describe the steps you would

take to rehabilitate the land and buildings of an old, worn-out farm.

82. Describe the operation of a family-owned farm that produces as its main source of income a single crop.
83. Have you ever done something of which you were really proud: for example, made a graduation dress, grown a prize-winning plant, or raised a valuable animal? Write a step-by-step account of how you went about it.
84. Write a narrative account of some group effort in which you participated with a number of other people — such as a school play, a paper drive, or a project to clean up a playground. Make clear the purpose of the project, who took part and on what basis they were selected, and what was done to get the project under way and moving. What difficulties were encountered, and how were they met?
85. Learning to walk again (after a long illness).
86. "To Catch a Thief."
87. "The Play Is the Thing." (How to stage amateur theatricals.)
88. How to make an old car *look* speedy.
89. How to read a story to a young child.
90. How to publish a newspaper.
91. How to be a lifeguard.
92. How to manage a band (or team).
93. How to work one's way through school.
94. How to find a job.
95. How to cure hiccoughs.
96. How to cure insomnia.
97. How to be a champion (sport or game) player.

COMPARISON AND CONTRAST

1. If you were left a legacy of $2,000, would you use it to finance a trip abroad or a year at college?
2. If you had your choice, would you live now or 100 years ago?
3. Contrast: What I thought college would be like, and what it is really like.
4. Demonstrate the superiority of one related sport or game over another; such as fishing over hunting, tennis over golf, or chess over bridge. Give enough illustrative details to show that you know what you are talking about.
5. Compare two vocations in which you are interested and about which you have some knowledge. Cover the points which would be of interest to students facing a choice between these occupations.
6. Compare or contrast the treatment of evil in two literary works.
7. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of living today rather than a century ago.
8. Contrast the difference in tastes, habits, and attitudes between "highbrows" and "lowbrows."
9. Jawaharlal Nehru once said, "Of all countries, the United States and the Soviet Union are nearer to each other than any two countries in the world." What are the similarities that Nehru might see? What accounts for them?
10. The recent census report indicated that many people are returning to cities from sub-

urbs. What disadvantages of suburban living could account for this change? What advantages are there in urban living?

11. How does the intellectual and cultural life of your own community differ from that of some other town or city in your state? In what ways is your city superior? In what ways is it inferior?
12. Will you bring up your children according to "progressive" methods or will you prefer "old-fashioned" discipline? Compare the two approaches.
13. Choose some difficult concept that you have recently met within one of your courses — how airplanes fly, how the human lung or a camera works. Explain the process to the uninitiated by comparing it to something with which he is familiar — a bird, a bellows, or a box with a shutter.
14. It is frequently said that cities vary in tone — that each gives a feeling that is unique. Compare two cities of similar size with which you are familiar, showing what characteristics lead to the difference in feelings.
15. Compare any two important revolutions, considering specifically their aims and methods.
16. Contrast two musicians, painters, athletes, sports announcers, or teachers that you are familiar with.
17. How did a movie you saw compare with the book on which it was based?
18. Contrast courtship, past and present.
19. Contrast wartime and peacetime.
20. Contrast military and civilian life.
21. Contrast the East and the West.
22. Many experiments have been made with the use of television in schools and colleges. What advantages do students receive from television teaching? What are the disadvantages?
23. Do you believe that installment buying is a benefit or a curse to the public? What are its advantages, or disadvantages, compared with cash purchases?
24. Compare living at home and living in a college dorm.
25. Compare modern methods of prospecting for oil, gold, or other minerals with those methods used a century ago.
26. Colleges are like cafeterias: they offer many choices. (Make the comparison more specific by adding details and carrying forward the comparison.)
27. Compare two kinds of music, or the music of two groups of people.
28. Compare or contrast two styles of talking or driving a car.
29. Compare two speakers you have heard, or preachers you have heard.
30. Compare two TV programs you have seen.
31. Compare two jobs you have held.
32. Compare two organizations you have been in.

THE SCHOOL

1. The student's role in modern life.
2. A deficiency in American education.
3. Social prestige in high school.
4. A married woman goes to college.
5. What will a college degree be worth in the future?
6. Can a smart student flunk?
7. What makes a course popular with students?
8. Classroom morals.
9. The place of science in education.
10. Who deserves a college education?
11. Extracurricular activities.
12. Interracial relations in our school.
13. Red tape.
14. Where students are likely to break down.
15. Some reasons students fail examinations.
16. The essential requirements of a good teacher.
17. What my car is doing to my grades.
18. Universal school dilemma: smoking in the john.
19. Vandalism in the school: cause and effect.
20. Challenge vs. Mediocrity.
21. Can we be equal and excellent too?
22. I'd prefer the little red schoolhouse.
23. The forgotten minority in American education.
24. Vacations are too short.
25. Sex education should be compulsory.
26. Schools try to do too much.
27. The three R's — plus reasoning.
28. A fad in our school.

FARMING

1. The value of 4-H clubs.
2. Scientific farming.
3. Crop rotation.
4. Social life in rural communities.
5. Farms: the life of the nation.
6. Crops of the future.
7. The development of hybrid corn.
8. Contour farming.
9. Contour plowing.
10. Dairy farming.
11. Development of hybrids.
12. Kinds of erosion and their cause.
13. What is a farmer's cooperation association?
14. The farmer: yesterday and today.
15. A problem (project) of the modern farmer.
16. The case for price supports.
17. Food as a diplomatic weapon.
18. Can the family farm survive?

RELIGION

1. The place of religion in the world today.
2. Does religion make sense?
3. Religion and life.
4. A modern code for living.
5. The basic teachings of my church.
6. The real values of going to church.
7. Religion in school.

8. Qualities of a good sermon.
9. I agree with Abou Ben Adhem.
10. Life of a minister.
11. Islam: the third great religion.
12. Life of a saint.
13. The church's responsibility in the secular world.

THE ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

1. The place of the arts today.
2. Are literary standards being lowered?
3. Interior decoration (color schemes, period furniture, TV, etc.).
4. American programs.
5. A few things everyone should know about art.
6. The illusion in the phrase "modern civilization."
7. Schools of modern art.
8. Printing may become a minor art.
9. Movies insult the mind.
10. "Reading maketh the full man."
11. Profitable popular magazines.
12. The news magazine.
13. The future of dress design.
14. Three types of villains.
15. Types of American architecture.
16. The ingredients of a good mystery play, story, movie, play, book, or radio program.
17. Movie villains — new style.
18. Movies and morals.
19. The values of the little theater group.
20. The best entertainment of the year.
21. Opportunities for a career in the arts.
22. If television lived up to its possibilities.
23. The need for greater support of the arts.
24. Should we have a "State" theater?
25. Of what intrinsic value are the arts?
26. Musical theater: an American contribution.
27. Arts programs in the schools.
28. TV is a sedative for the mind.
29. RV's: back to nature in a Winnebago.

SPORTS

1. Basketball as a spectator sport.
2. The nation's top football team.
3. The future of college sports.
4. Fickleness of sports fans.
5. Crowding the hero-bench.
6. An outstanding sports event.
7. Winter sports.
8. Gambling in professional sports.
9. Are athletics physical education?
10. Women in sports.
11. Sports propaganda.
12. What is sportsmanship?
13. Athletics at our school.
14. Recent changes in basketball (or other) rules and tactics.
15. America's greatest athlete.
16. An exciting moment in a game.
17. Is winning necessary?
18. The Greek Olympics.
19. When their athletic glories have faded.
20. Life is like a game of basketball.
21. Should the U.S. government financially support our Olympic team?
22. Motorized macho: four-wheeled drivers.
23. Boating: sailing vs. motoring.
24. Intramural Sports vs. Intermural Sports.

25. Big Ten basketball.
26. Sports as an avenue to world peace.
27. Physical education as a prelude to using leisure time healthfully.
28. Sports in other countries.
29. Jock vs. Scholar.

SCIENCE

1. Possibilities in plastics.
2. Streamlined cars — coming or going.
3. Fabrics of the future.
4. How atomic energy can be utilized for industrial purposes.
5. Advantages of frequency modulation.
6. How long can a car last?
7. The most interesting idea in physics.
8. The place of science in modern life.
9. A modern invention.
10. Travel in the next decade.
11. The useful soybean.
12. A recent development in medicine.
13. Vitamins.
14. The chemistry of warfare.
15. Plastic surgery.
16. A recent important scientific development.
17. A useful gadget.
18. House of tomorrow.
19. The latest development in airplanes (or radar, highways, automobiles, etc.).
20. A great engineering project.
21. Lost in a test tube.
22. DDT builds super-insects.
23. Will everybody fly?
24. Opportunities for a career in science.
25. Cloning.
26. Communities in space.
27. Test tube babies.
28. Are there black holes?
29. Nuclear vs. solar energy.
30. Environment vs. progress.
31. Scientific ethnics.
32. Mind control (*1984*).
33. The search for a synthetic source of energy.
34. Mathematics as a creative endeavor.
35. Searching for mankind's roots.
36. Replenishing natural resources.
37. Save our wildlife!
38. A Nobel Prize discovery.
39. When science meets the humanities.
40. The most important invention of the 20th century.

PERSUASIVE EXPOSITION

1. Foreign customs we should borrow.
2. Borrowing as a good policy.
3. Let there be music.
4. Decline of courtesy.
5. The horse must come before the cart.
6. Some advice to incoming freshmen.
7. There ought to be a law.
8. Gambling in sports should be allowed.
9. Live and let live.
10. High school grads don't have a chance.
11. Roadside advertising.
12. American youth need education in happy family living.
13. The recreation facilities in _____ are inadequate.
14. What a home ought to be.
15. The case for relaxation.
16. Be a non-conformist.
17. One argument against war.

18. An intangible quality which is important to successful living.
19. Don't count too much on first impression.
20. Reforms needed in the field of education.
21. Children should (not) have the responsibility for caring for aged or ailing parents.
22. Early marriage is desirable.
23. Inter-collegiate athletics should (not) be abolished.
24. Compulsory education to the age of 18.
25. The ideal plan to give Americans the best possible medical care.
26. Food as a weapon.
27. Give me a small school.
28. Comics serve a purpose.
29. Youth is the time for experiment.
30. Let us choose our own friends (courses, etc.).
31. Do athletics injure the body?
32. Do athletic build character?
33. Create a product which will revolutionize the world. Write the advertising copy on how it will be sold.
34. (Persuasive letter. Each student is given a travel brochure.) Make a letter to accompany the brochure to advertise the "vacations." Use attention-capturing devices and spacing to make the letter appeal to the reader. Include important facts and details about the vacation package.
35. Persuade your school board to adopt a policy of an "open campus."
36. Education is the tool for success.
37. From the following list of *six factors of life*, select the three you believe to be most important and give your reasons for choosing each. (1. Friends, 2. Education, 3. Family, 4. Money, 5. Religion, 6. Health.) Which do you rank first, second, and so on? Explain your evaluation.
38. From the following list, select the three professions and occupations which you believe have *contributed most to civilization* and explain your reasons. (1. Preacher, 2. Farmer, 3. Scientist, 4. Artisan, 5. Politician, 6. Teacher.)
39. Imagine that there are *three modern conveniences* that you and your family must give up, one at a time, beginning a year from now. Which three will they be from the following list? Explain your reasons for your choices and the order of their elimination. (1. Telephone, 2. Radio and Television, 3. Automobile, 4. Refrigerator, 5. Bathroom, 6. Washing machine.)
40. Suppose ten people are stranded in a desert and a helicopter can only save four. The others must be left behind to perish. You are the helicopter pilot. Whom would you save and why? (1. Army Captain, 2. Miss America, 3. A twelve year old boy, 4. A wealthy society woman, 5. A noted scientist, 6. A preacher or priest, 7. Your best friend, 8. A football hero, 9. A bricklayer, 10. A medical doctor.)
41. You are to spend two years in a lighthouse where there will be no outside communication except occasional mail. You will be allowed a quota of printed material: Three books and a subscription to one magazine which will be delivered by helicopter. What

books and magazine will you choose and why?

42. A famous publishing company is producing a book on how to handle teenagers. This book is written for parents and ten million copies will be distributed. You have been asked to give four guidelines in return for a handsome fee. What four pieces of advice would you give and why?
43. The President has appointed you to a special commission to make high school more relevant to life. What topic would you add to your English classes to make this area more relevant?
44. You've just been hired as principal. What three things will you do to get the majority of students to do their homework?
45. You are an expert on education. A congressional committee on education has invited you to speak at their hearing. They will ask you to list and explain at least two of the best qualities of high school today and the two worst qualities of high school. What will you say?
46. The high cost of smoking.
47. Education should turn to the year-round school.
48. What to do if you disagree with the IRS.
49. How to understand the perplexing teenager.
50. Recycling: Answer to our garbage predicament.
51. Shoplifters beware!
52. Speaking out against pornography.
53. How to get control of your time.
54. It's time to face the energy crisis.
55. Hitching — too often the last ride.
56. Let's not go overboard on ecology.
57. Civilians should have guns.
58. There is no energy shortage.
59. Homework — To Be or Not To Be?
60. "I think intelligent forms of life may exist in other galaxies for the following reasons:" or "I do not think intelligent life exists in other galaxies for the following reasons:"
61. I *do* believe in U.F.O.'s (unidentified flying objects) (tell why).
62. I do *not* believe in U.F.O.'s (tell why).
63. Should football in high school be abolished?
64. Should final examinations be abolished?
65. Should our present grading system be abolished or changed?
66. Because much scientific evidence has linked cigarette smoking and lung cancer, what steps, if any, should our government take to supervise the sale of cigarettes and the advertisements of cigarette companies?
67. Explain and refute some misconceptions about members of a particular racial, religious, or political group.
68. Discuss the problems, including methods of control, caused by one kind of pest harmful to agriculture.
69. In some colleges, men are required to take ROTC. Do you think an equivalent program should be required of women? Give reasons.
70. If you were asked to redesign present automobiles, what changes would you make?
71. What provisions should be made for the support of the aged in your state?

72. What effects do you believe TV will have on the education of young people?
73. Most European countries give financial support to some theaters, symphonies, and opera companies. Should the U.S. follow their example? Why or why not?
74. What are the harmful effects of excessive commercialism in professional sports, such as boxing, baseball, and football? What are the best possible remedies?
75. Every child should have music lessons.
76. Every child should have assigned chores.
77. Every married couple should restrict the number of children born to them to help curtail the population explosion.
78. Non-graded schools are best for young children.
79. Sex education should (should not) be instituted in grade schools.
80. The reason I oppose socialized medicine (medicare) concerns the doctor — it simply is not fair to him. (How much less he would be paid under socialized medicine.)
81. Tell why one rule in football (or some other sport) should be changed.
82. A freshman should (should not) join a sorority or fraternity.
83. All Christians should (should not) study Greek.
84. Every student should study at least one year abroad.
85. TV is (is not) harmful to children.
86. Busing for integration should (should not be) discontinued.
87. Suggest some new laws to aid the energy crisis, and show how they will help.
88. Euthanasia — for or against.
89. Discuss the arguments against or for capital punishment.
90. Since auto racing has taken a great many lives, do you think it should be continued? Why?
91. Should we have mandatory social security?
92. Everyone should take a driver's test every year.
93. Everyone should take vitamins everyday.
94. Should the government make more laws on pollution?
95. People should donate their organs, at death, to those with diseased organs.
96. No demonstrations should be allowed near our national monuments in Washington, D.C.
97. The electoral college should be abolished.
98. Divorce laws should be tightened to make divorces harder to get.
99. Men should not have to pay alimony in divorce cases where the wife works.
100. Reading in grade schools should be taught by using the ITA alphabet.
101. In fighting for civil rights, minorities may (may not) be hurting their own cause. How? Explain fully, adding pertinent examples and details.
102. Explain the chief problem at your school or in your home town and suggest a remedy.
103. Change to a phonetic alphabet in the U.S. — pro or con.
104. College athletes should (should not) join a sorority or fraternity.
105. Freshman initiation should be abolished.
106. College students should (should not) have cars on campus.

107. Freshman orientation should be changed.
108. All required courses should be organized on a Pass/Fail system.
109. F.C.C. "fairness doctrine" is unfair to radio and TV.
110. Newspapers should not be allowed to carry pictorial advertising for X-rated movies.
111. F.C.C. restrictions on radio and TV are really curtailing free speech.
112. There should be no commercials during children's programs on TV.
113. Honors programs should be established at every college.
114. Every child should have a pet.
115. All students should have to earn at least part of their college tuition.
116. Everyone should wear seatbelts when in a car.
117. _____ is the best football player ever to play in the U.S.
118. _____ is the best president the U.S. has ever had.
119. Government should pay for political campaigns.
120. Abortion — for or against.
121. Forced integration — for or against.
122. Mothers should (should not) hold jobs.
123. All homemakers should (should not) have dishwashers.
124. Retarded children should be: in special schools *OR* in public schools.
125. Gun legislation — for or against.
126. Birth control pills are (are not) harmful.
127. D.D.T. should not be used as a pest control.
128. Should U.S. change to the metric system — pro or con.
129. Sex education in school — pro or con.
130. Day care center — good or bad?
131. Everyone should study a foreign language.
132. Is homosexuality right or wrong?
133. Health foods are good for you — pro or con.
134. U.S. foreign aid policies — good or bad?
135. The present welfare system is good — pro or con.
136. Should Congressmen be allowed to take world trips at the taxpayers' expense?

ARGUMENTATIVE EXPOSITION

1. Should income taxes be reduced?
2. Is football being commercialized?
3. Should the United States take the lead in world disarmament?
4. The advantages (or disadvantages) of having too many friends.
5. Should eighteen-year-olds be allowed to vote?
6. Should the presidency of the United States be limited to one six-year term?
7. Should Congress pass anti-lynch legislation?
8. Are depressions inevitable?
9. Work your way through college.
10. Is the closed shop democratic?
11. Should teachers organize?
12. Can a socialist state remain democratic?
13. Scientists: on tap or on top?
14. Advantages of good business ethics.
15. The right to strike.
16. Consolidation of rural schools.
17. Why learn foreign languages?

18. Scientific advances justify wars.
19. Do engineers need liberal arts courses?
20. Presidents should be elected by popular vote.
21. English should not be required of all students.
22. Is Veteran's Day now a mockery?
23. Who said progress?
24. Are too many people going to college?
25. It's a mistake to subsidize athletes.
26. What this country needs is a good third party.
27. Is co-education here to stay?
28. Should socialized medicine be adopted?
29. Shall I drink?
30. Advertising pays, or does it?
31. Is our grading system fair?
32. The working mother: pro's and con's.
33. Would a depression help our country in any way?
34. Is it non-egalitarian to group students according to their ability in the American educational system?
35. An automobile at 16: A teenager's inevitable right?
36. The merger of our armed forces.
37. Simplified spelling.
38. Intelligence tests — so called.
39. Exams — a good or bad idea?
40. Labor versus management.
41. Compulsory military training for girls?
42. Should all officers come up through the ranks?
43. Saturday classes.
44. Why get married?
45. Destroy atomic bomb formulas.
46. Start preparing for war.
47. Television is too commercialized.
48. Do we spend our time wisely?
49. Congress should legislate, not investigate.
50. What our school needs most.
51. Merits of the younger (older) generation.
52. Driver-training should be compulsory.
53. The role of woman changes.
54. What is it like to grow old in America?
55. Gifts of love are of more worth than expensive presents.
56. Based on the non-fiction selections you've read, write your definition of civilized behavior. How does this fit into *your* concept of civilization?
57. Discuss the good and/or bad points of man's attempts to improve his lifestyle through advanced technology.
58. What are the criteria for successfully finishing high school?
59. If baby food is nourishing, why don't adults eat it?
60. If a fire destroyed all our grammar texts, and you were to teach this course next semester, what six basic rules would you cover? Why?
61. Is there a place for civil disobedience in high school?
62. Is it better to "play it safe" or take chances?
63. You are a philosopher about to die; what is your message to the world — in 50 words or less?
64. How much control do we have over our lives?
65. Can prejudice be eliminated (overcome, lessened, etc.)?
66. Should one try to help others, or is it better to watch out for himself?
67. Is fantasizing harmful or beneficial?
68. Do you have to be number one to be a success?
69. Is there a place for dissent in high school?
70. How can students with nega-

tive attitudes toward school be helped?

71. "Everybody does it." Is this a good justification for one's actions?
72. Imagine that you are a marriage counselor and a single person (early 20's) asks you to explain the qualities one should look for when choosing a mate. List and explain from 3 to 5 of these qualities.
73. A big city newspaper wants to write a feature story on what an ideal teacher is from the students' point of view. You have been asked to list at least three qualities and to explain each one with an example. What three qualities will you select?
74. Where does liberty end and license begin?
75. Women are the favored sex.
76. Do you have trouble losing weight permanently?
77. Is no-fault insurance the answer?
78. We must halve our runaway government budget.
79. Your emotions can make you ill.
80. What values should we teach our children?
81. You can stop being a procrastinator.
82. A time for toughness in America.
83. Who's to blame for inflation?
84. What you should know about new-car options.
85. What's behind the balance of payments problem.
86. The plain truth about VD.
87. Why young people turn to drugs.
88. Why food prices keep rising.
89. Watergate — the prod to the American conscience.
90. Ten money mistakes to avoid.
91. How to enjoy our leisure time.
92. Has compulsory education outlived its usefulness?
93. Horsepower vs. Economy.
94. How can you love someone while not liking him?
95. Should lawyers and doctors advertise their services?
96. The need for national heroes.
97. Should adopted children be allowed to find their natural parents?
98. Conformity: the promise or plague of the human race?
99. Describe your high school training in either science or English and evaluate it.
100. Give an analytical description of a trip you have made through a factory or mill, showing as well as you can how the machine has come to dominate men in the modern industrial process.

WHAT IF...

1. You are lost in the desert.
2. You are trapped in the bedroom of a burning building.
3. You are threatened by a hitchhiker with a knife.
4. You are approached by cretures from outer space who have just landed in a flying saucer.
5. Your car stalls in a blizzard.
6. You are driving on the expressway and your brakes go out.
7. You are crossing the street and a car is approaching you rapidly. The driver is deliberately trying to run you down.
8. The crowd at a football game panics due to an approaching storm; you are in danger of being crushed.
9. Your car stalls on the railroad

tracks. You hear a train approaching rapidly.
10. You are lost at sea on a raft.
11. You are lost in the wilderness.
12. You are walking through the park when a gang attacks and threatens you.
13. You are trapped in an explosion and temporarily blinded.
14. You are trapped in an elevator.
15. You are the pilot of a plane threatened by a highjacker.
16. You are the owner of a store. A robber enters with a gun. He wants all the cash you have.
17. You are swimming in very deep water when you get cramps in your legs. A shark is nearby.
18. You are a spy who is caught by the enemy.
19. You are driving across a bridge when it begins to collapse.
20. Your boat runs aground and is damaged in the jungle while you are a guide for a safari.
21. You see a tornado funnel heading right for your neighborhood.
22. You are the victim of a very serious train wreck.
23. The warning of a nuclear bomb attack affects your city. Further announcements seem quite definite the bomb is heading your way.
24. You see a tornado funnel while you are driving your car along a lonely, deserted country road. It seems to be headed straight for you.
25. What would happen if tomorrow morning not one car would work?
26. A fifteen-year-old girl learns she is pregnant.
27. A sixteen-year-old boy is arrested.
28. A teenager learns his/her parents are getting a divorce.
29. A senior fails two classes needed to graduate.
30. A teenager knows his/her best friend is considering suicide.
31. A teenager is pressured by his/her friends to drink alcohol or use drugs.
32. A teenager witnesses shoplifting in his/her parents' store and the robbers are friends.
33. A freshman is caught cheating on a test.
34. One day I looked into the mirror and noticed I had turned into a _____.
35. One day you discovered you had become "flat." Write of your adventures as a "flat" person. (Example: I had to eat macaroni — I was so flat I could slide under the door.)
36. One day the teacher drank a potion (by mistake) that made him/her invisible. Write about the experiences the teacher encountered.
37. Because of a severe copper shortage all forms of electronic communications are in serious trouble. Telephone service has been limited to emergency calls only. Because of the overload, all non-business mail has been stopped. Each citizen will be permitted to mail one last letter. Decide to whom you would send this last letter and write it.
38. You've finally received your driver's license, and your dad lets you take the car for an evening. On the way to pick up friends, you misjudge a corner, hit a fire hydrant, and put a dent in the side of the car.
39. Your best friend who has been

having trouble at home confides in you that he or she is going to run away. You know that he or she is going to join the local drug scene in a certain city and you know where. What do you do?

40. Lincoln had not been assassinated; Custer had won at Little Big Horn; the South had won the Civil War?

IMPROMPTU TOPICS

1. My most embarrassing moment was _____.
2. The most important rule for handling the opposite sex is _____.
3. My favorite politicians (or actors or singers) are _____.
4. The most critical problem facing the United States is _____.
5. The biggest reason why men and women can't get together is _____.
6. My opinion on women's liberation (or men's liberation) is _____.
7. The nicest thing anyone ever did for me was _____.
8. A best friend is someone who _____.
9. I think school is valuable because _____.
10. The career that I would like to enter when I finish my schooling is _____.
11. If I won a free three-week dream vacation, I would travel to _____.
12. If I had one wish (for anything in the world) I would select _____.
13. If I could have a safe trip on a time machine to go back anywhere in history, I would go see _____.
14. The best thing that happened to me last summer was _____.
15. My hero is _____.
16. The things that a person needs to be happy include _____.
17. My most important goal in my life is _____.
18. A good teacher is someone who _____.
19. A good student is someone who _____.
20. My definition of "ugly" is _____.
21. The most asinine politician I know is _____ because _____.
22. _____ has done more than any other person to deepen the differences between the political factions in our country.
23. The trouble with our country is _____.
24. The main fault with our society is its intolerance of _____.
25. If I could be anything in the world, I would be _____.
26. If I were president of the U.S. I would _____.
27. If I were teaching this course, I would _____.

WRITING ABOUT LITERATURE

1. Conflict in literature is often categorized as man against man, man against himself, man against society, and man against nature. As you think about your own life or the lives of the people you know or hear about, you should

be able to discuss your ideas and feelings about conflict in your life.

A. In the stories we have read, we have been presented with various ways to cope with conflict, some good and some bad. After deciding on whether or not to discuss *EXTERNAL* or *INTERNAL* conflict, discuss *three* effective ways to cope with this particular type of conflict. Use examples from the stories or your own experiences to support your statements.

B. Why do you feel there are conflicts between people of different races, nationalities, or personalities? Since this is definitely an opinion theme, you should use examples from the stories we have read, from your own reading, and from your experiences. Give *three* reasons why conflicts occur between these groups of people.

C. Have you ever moved to a different community, country, or school? If so, you know that there are many conflicts to be encountered. Discuss at least *three* conflicts involved in a "move." What were your feelings? How did you face the problems and resolve them? What advice would you give to "newcomers" in order to aid them in confronting these conflicts?

D. Some conflicts, particularly inner struggles (internal), may produce positive results. Explain an internal conflict which taught you something or had positive overtones. What was the conflict? Was there an external conflict which accompanied it? What was the cause(s)? Results? In what way was the result(s) positive?

E. Point of view is particularly helpful in developing the conflict and theme in a story. Using ONE incident from any of the stories we read, rewrite the situation from a different point of view (another character's point of view). Make the necessary changes to accommodate the personalities of the "narrator" you have chosen. Use narrative; do not use dialogue.

F. Many times conflicts stem from our own personality weaknesses. Recognizing these weaknesses and trying to cope with or improve them is part of the maturing process. After some deep thought, discuss *YOUR* own personality weakness(es). What conflicts are caused by these weak characteristics? How can you overcome this weakness?

2. My own *Spoon River Anthology*.
3. 1984 creeps closer.
4. I wish I had been the author of....
5. *To Kill a Mockingbird:* optimistic or pessimistic novel?
6. If you could be any person in the past, present or future (use your imagination), who would you be? How would you solve any conflicts?
7. Consider the roles of women in American literature. Cite specific characters (Hester,

Daisy, Antonia, Phoebe, Lenn, Catherine Sloper).

8. Describe a Promethean figure in American society or literature.
9. *Roots*—Interview older family members for interesting anecdotes of family history. Imaginatively develop one small incident with descriptive details and dialogue to make an interesting narrative.
10. The individual conscience against the state (after reading *Antigone*).
11. A literary person, place, or thing that has influenced my life.
12. Someone, something, or someplace to which I turn for comfort when I am depressed or unhappy.
13. "It was war and we had to expect it... It couldn't be helped. Oh, well. Too bad."
14. "... they are holding a trial for war criminals just now. I think they ought to try the men who decided to use the Bomb and they should hang them all."
15. "Some of us consider the Bomb in the same category as poison gas and we're against its use on a civilian population."
16. "In a total war, there is no difference between civilians and soldiers. The bomb itself was an effective force tending to end the bloodshed, warning Japan to surrender and thus avoid total destruction."
17. Based on your reactions to the book *HIROSHIMA* and the filmstrip *HIROSHIMA DECISION*, write a three-paragraph paper. In the first paragraph state your feelings about the development and use of the bomb on Japan. (Was it important? Necessary? Morally right?) In the second paragraph, defend your opinion with supporting details. Supply at least three concrete reasons for your position. For the third paragraph, copy the quotation from above that most closely matches your feelings about the issue.
18. Write a sequel to *The Lady or the Tiger*.
19. Write a five-paragraph essay proving or disproving the statement, "In Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* George and Lennie need each other."
20. Write an essay on how in Daniel Keyes' *Flowers for Algernon* Charlie Gordon is more virtuous as a retarded person than he is as a genius.
21. The black box in the short story *The Lottery* is central to the meaning of the story. Discuss the ways in which Shirley Jackson matches its qualities to qualities of the ceremony to enhance the theme.
22. In Faulkner's story *A Rose for Emily*, what *is* the "rose" for Miss Emily? What do you think Faulkner is trying to say in that title?
23. Compare and contrast the two young boys in *I Spy* and *Christmas Morning*. Be sure to include in your discussion the authors' purpose(s).
24. Tolstoy's *Master and Man*—Write a newspaper article which reveals the character of Vasili Andreyitch or Nikita. The article may be a feature article, obituary, human interest story, or a straight news story.
25. Write a characterization of John Conlan from Paul Zin-

del's *The Pigman* from the point of view of John's father.

26. Write a letter to an assigned individual nominating or supporting the nomination of a specific literary character for an honor befitting the character's attributes and actions.
27. In the study of a specific literary work have the student select a major character who interests him. Throughout the reading have the student maintain a diary in which he expresses his personal reaction to the character's thoughts and actions. Follow-up writing assignments:
    (a) The author created a believable/unbelievable character.
    (b) The character exemplifies the values of his/her culture.
    (c) I agree/disagree with the thoughts and action of the character.
28. Compare and contrast the characters of Hester (*Scarlet Letter*) and Antonia (*My Antonia*).
29. 1765: Wazi K'huti ahi'ktepi (The year Shooting Pine died). This is an actual date from a Sioux calendar. Students research and write, in narrative form, the story of Shooting Pine's death.
30. Create a legend revolving around how something came to be (Ex.: how the raccoon got its mask, how the sky got a rainbow, etc.).
31. It is possible to read *Scarlet Letter* as allegory showing the importance of and the qualities of art, nature, science and religion. Explain how the four main characters are portrayed to work as symbols of these four: Hester–art, Pearl–nature, Chillingworth–science, Dimmesdale–religion. Or, using Chillingworth and Dimmesdale, explain Hawthorne's view of the relationship between science and religion.
32. Identify the techniques by which Hardy attempts to reconcile his use of coincidence.
33. Compare *Jane Eyre* and one of Hardy's novels in the authors' use of coincidence.
34. How does the Roman background of *Mayor of Casterbridge* enhance the theme of old versus new?
35. If you were one of the Earnshaw children, how would you feel about having Heathcliff around your house?
36. Suppose that you have displeased a god and that he plans to punish you by turning you into a plant or an animal. You want him to give you a choice of the plant or animal you will become. Write about what you did to make the god angry and about the arguments you would use to get your way.
37. Pretend that you, like the ancient Greeks, have no knowledge of science. You are puzzled by nature. Why do cats have whiskers? Why can deer run so fast? Why does the hyena laugh? Write an original myth explaining the answer to one of these questions or to a different question that you prefer.
38. Gods and goddesses often visited families on earth. Suppose a god or goddess visited your hometown and you offered to show him around. What kind of tour would you plan? Write a theme about

the tour and the reactions of the god.

39. If you could invite two of the Olympians to dinner, which ones would you select? What would the menu be? What would the decorations be? How might the conversation go? Write a description of the dinner party.
40. Hercules ridded the ancient Greek countryside of monsters and captured wondrous animals and objects. If Hercules lived today, what might his labors be? Would he overcome tidal waves? Would he unsnarl traffic jams? What are some other modern "monsters"? Describe an adventure of a modern Hercules.
41. Three gods were squabbling over an apple inscribed "For the Bravest." Zeus chooses you to settle the dispute. Which gods are involved? What are their bribes? Write about the bravery contest. Tell how you decide upon the winner.
42. Compare and contrast Gertrude and Lady Macbeth.
43. Discuss how *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* deal with the idea that every man is a "man of blood."
44. Discuss how *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* deal with the idea that "nothing is but what is not."
45. In *Eight Great Tragedies*, edited by Sylvan Barnet, we find this quotation: "Most people would agree... that tragedy depicts man's troubles. But this is only half the story, for tragic drama does not stop with troubles, but goes on to achieve some sort of affirmation, and thus it is optimistic rather than (as commonly thought) pessimistic." In this context, how are *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* optimistic?
46. Serious flaws seem to exist in the characters who are rulers or potential rulers in both plays. Consider Claudius, Hamlet, Duncan and Macbeth and their abilities as rulers, politicians and judges of character. Are their "flaws" any different from ordinary people's? If not, what implication is the reader supposed to draw? If so, what implication?
47. For Shakespeare's plays to live, they must speak to us in our time, to the 20th century. Discuss how *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* do so.

SOME DIFFERENT READING ACTIVITIES

1. Could the book you are reading be made into a TV series? Why, or why not? What sort of episodes would you add to more fully develop what has already happened in the book?
2. Would the book make a good movie? Why, or why not?
   — Where would you choose to have it filmed?
   — Do you think you could act one of the parts? Which one, and why?
   — Would you leave out any part of the book or add anything to it as a movie?
3. If you were to add yourself to the book you are reading, what type of character would you be? How would that character improve the story?

4. Were the people in your book able to do what they did alone, or did they need someone's help? Why?
5. How would your book change if one of the characters was missing? If you could omit one character, who would you choose and why?
6. Do you think your book would be the same if boys (men) were substituted for girls (women) and vice versa? Explain your answer.
7. If you are reading a story about people, what animals would you substitute for the characters in the book? Why? Would they be cartoon-like or more realistic? (If the book is about animals — you can reverse the question to "what persons....")
8. What did the author need to know before he or she wrote the book you're reading? How might you go about gaining that knowledge?
9. What would change in your book if it took place in the country instead of the city, or vice versa?
10. Does the story in your book use machines? How? Are they essential?
11. What sort of music would fit your book? Would different parts of the book (sequences, characters, etc.) require different types of music? Explain.
12. How would the story you are reading be different if it occurred 50 years earlier? (Later?)
13. Do you think your parents would enjoy reading your book? Why, or why not?
14. Make a poster advertising the book.
15. Make a travel poster inviting tourists to visit the setting of your book.
16. Make an attractive "jacket" for your book.
17. Make a diorama of a scene from your book.
18. Design some costumes for the characters in your book.
19. If your book has no pictures, make some illustrations to go with it.
20. If it is a book that told you how to make something, bring something that you made to display for the class.
21. If your book is a recipe book, make something from it to share with the class.
22. If it is a travel book, prepare a "talk" on travel.
23. After reading a book of poetry, memorize a poem to share with the class.
24. After reading a book of poetry, begin a scrapbook of poems that you like.
25. After reading a book of poetry, write an original poem.
26. Write a paragraph explaining why you did or did not like the book.
27. Explain, in a written paragraph, how the book could be used in history or science.
28. Write a description of one of the characters. Draw a portrait to accompany this description.
29. Write a different ending for the story.
30. Make a list of new words you encountered in the book. Find definitions for these words, and make this into a little dictionary.
31. Change the story into a pantomime to give to the class.
32. Write a letter to a friend recommending the book.
33. If it is a book about a country, make a map and put on it

some of the information you learned from reading the book.

34. Write a list of questions you think anyone should be able to answer after reading this book (this works best with nonfiction).
35. Draw a picture of the setting of the story.
36. Write a letter to the librarian, telling her why she ought to recommend the book to other students.
37. Give a review of the book before another class.
38. Make a list of facts you learned after reading a factual book.
39. Rewrite the story in simpler vocabulary so that a younger student could enjoy it.
40. If it is a science book, plan a demonstration for the class. Make sure you've tried it first!
41. If it is an historical book, make a time line to show the events in sequence.
42. Read two or three books by the same author and write an essay comparing them.
43. Read two books on the same subject and write an essay comparing them.
44. Write a review of the book such as you might find in the newspaper or in a magazine.
45. Write a newspaper article telling about an incident in the story as you might find an incident described in a news story.
46. Suggest some changes that would improve the story.
47. State an opinion which you have about a subject. Read some books and consult some reference books for information that supports or does not support your opinion.
48. After reading a nonfiction book for information on a topic, write a short report on this topic: "What surprised me most when I read about _____."
49. As you read a book about another country, pretend you are traveling in that country. Keep a diary telling of your experiences in that country as you read the book.
50. Pretend you are a character in a book. Keep a diary of your experiences throughout the book.
51. After reading a book that explains how to make something, make a chart explaining to others. Make sure your chart includes "Things Needed" and "What to Do."
52. Prepare a collection of something you have read about (rocks, coins, stamps, etc.).
53. Find out about the author of a book. If possible, write to the author and tell him how you felt about his book.
54. Read a book that has a story you've seen on TV or in a movie. Write a report comparing the written story with the one you saw.
55. Prepare a 5-minute review of your book and record it on tape.
56. The author has written you personally. He wants to know if and how you think his book could have been improved for appeal to your age group. He has suggested several points for consideration and asks that your evaluation be limited to *3 sentences each* for a., b. and c. below:
    a. Flow of plot. Did it drag or was your interest kept while you read? Why?
    b. Characters. Were they

realistic? Did they accord with the way your generation sees people? Why?

c. Style of writing. Interesting, or too wordy, or dry? Boring to read? Why?

57. A very impatient old lady has asked that you tell her about the main character in your book. Describe him or her in eight sentences.
58. A pen pal of yours from Russia has asked that you send him this book. He has heard that your book shows some aspect of American life in it, and he is anxious to learn about Americans. Write him a note (pretend you only have 25 minutes left in study hall to do this) telling him you will send the book and how it *agrees or disagrees* with the report he has heard.
59. A greater understanding of the problems people have to face and solve has come to me from reading (__book__).
60. After the details of (__book __) are forgotten, I will still remember (_____).
61. Take the role of a character in your book who thinks he was unfairly treated or represented. Tell what really happened.
62. Place yourself in the role of a minor character. Describe the main character from this point of view.
63. Cast known movie or TV personalities as characters in your book. Give a brief reason for each selection.
64. Rewrite the plot or part of it as a news story.
65. Rewrite the ending of the book. Tell why, in your opinion, the new ending is a satisfactory culmination.
66. Discuss the main character's accomplishments as well as the effects of these accomplishments on others in the book.
67. Summarize, as you would find the account in that person's diary, three critical days in the life of the character.
68. Write a letter in the role of a book character. It could be a letter sent at a critical moment in the action of the plot.
69. What were the conflicts of the book as far as the main character or characters were concerned?
70. Write a short sales presentation endeavoring to sell your book to your class. Be persuasive and tell its good points.
71. By referring to at least two ideas brought out in this book, tell why other teenagers would find the book helpful as well as entertaining.
72. Explain in what way your book has left an impression upon you as to its insights into human behavior or for its inspiring viewpoints.
73. Write an analysis of the book by a man of the future who finds it in a time capsule or in the ruins of the planet Earth.
74. Pretend the book was just published. Write a book review of it.
75. Tell what understandings you got from your reading, such as understanding yourself better, getting along with others, or changing your way of thinking.
76. What did you learn from the book that you read that can be used in everyday life? Ex-

plain fully and use specific examples (at least 3) from the book.

77. What effect did the setting have on the story? Remember setting includes both time and place. Be sure to mention *when* the story took place as well as *where*. How would changing the setting change the story itself?
78. What is the most important idea presented by the author in the book? Explain fully and use at least 3 comments regarding the importance of the idea.
79. Who is the memorable character in the book? What did he or she do that made him or her so distinctive and memorable? Use at least 3 comments to support your opinion.
80. What part of the book did you enjoy most? Why was that particular part so enjoyable? Use at least 3 examples to support your opinion.
81. How does the main character change throughout the course of the book? Use at least 3 examples to illustrate the change(s) the main character undergoes.
82. What value judgment of the book have you formed? Was it good? poor? boring? enjoyable? exciting? interesting? too factual? etc. Give examples and details to support your value judgment.
83. Ask at least 8-10 QUESTIONS of the character (fiction) or author (nonfiction). These questions can regard their feelings, their reactions to situations in the book, explanations of how to do one of the processes mentioned (nonfiction), reasons why something is or was done, or relationships between characters.
84. You must ask good questions which let the reader know what the book, characters, and main ideas were all about. The answers should require *more than a one- or two-word answer.*

PART II OF A THOUSAND TOPICS

This *Bulletin* is Part I of "A Thousand Topics for Composition." Part II, prepared especially for the elementary level by Professor Eldonna Evertts, College of Education, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, will comprise the Fall, 1980 issue of the *Illinois English Bulletin.*